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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004812

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN LIST BEGINS ACTIVE CAMPAIGN

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Poloffs met December 1 with Amjed Abdulahad, a member of the Christian list, "Al-Nahrain Watani," to discuss progress on the campaign and the political environment in the weeks prior to the December 15 election. Abdulahad said he hopes the election will result in an increase of the total number of Christians in the Assembly from six to at least ten. He said that his list has begun a multi-faceted political campaign, mainly in Ninewa and Baghdad provinces. He downplayed candidate intimidation as a problem, asserting that only Yonadim Kanna's list has been targeted within the Christian political community. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) The six-party Al-Nahrain Watani list is a mix of Assyrians and Chaldeans based primarily in Ninewa and Baghdad, but also running in Kirkuk, Diyala, Dohuk, and Basra provinces. A few other leading Christian politicians in Iraq are running on separate lists, or have joined forces with other non-Christian lists in order to increase their chances of winning a seat in the next elections. While there are a total of six Christians in the Transitional National Assembly, Abdulahad said he hoped this number would increase to at least ten in the new Council of Representatives.

¶3. (C) Abdulahad said Al-Nahrain Watani receives the majority of its financial support from members based outside of Iraq, including Sweden, Switzerland, and Germany. He said the Christian parties in his list began to campaign actively last week. In addition to putting up posters and distributing pamphlets, the Christians have been publishing special electoral newspapers, organizing town halls, participating in press conferences, and conducting TV interviews. Abdulahad's main complaint to poloffs was that the Christian list is not as large as other lists and thus needs more time to cover ground while campaigning.

¶4. (C) In contrast with other political leaders, Abdulahad downplayed reports of candidate intimidation. He asserted that Yonadim Kanna's list is the only Christian group facing intimidation. (NOTE: Three members of Yonadim's party were killed earlier this week in Ninewa province.) Poloffs affirmed the U.S. commitment to the participation of all Iraqis in the December 15 election and opposition to any instance of intimidation. Abdulahad avoided making speculations on why Kanna is being targeted, but instead went out of his way to emphasize that his list does not attack other parties as a campaign strategy.

¶5. (SBU) BIO NOTE: Amjed Abdulahad is a Chaldean born in the Christian district of Ankawa in Arbil. He went to university in Mosul and has lived most of his life in Baghdad. He said he decided to run as a candidate in Diyala province, to increase the percentage of votes his list receives in that province.  
KHALILZAD